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through the east door and exit from the south side. The dragon was supposed at the time to be lying with its head to the west and its tail to the east.

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With the near approach of the wedding-day the friends of the groom gather at his village, blowing horns, beating on gongs and drums, striking cymbals, and chanting "htas." Early on the wedding-morn every one is astir. The rice is cooked and eaten by sunrise and, to an accompaniment of all the noisy instruments and with shouting and singing, the party sets forth. In the olden days, when the precepts of the elders were strictly observed, there was much drinking of liquor and boisterous sport on such occasions, but withal a certain decorum was not altogether lacking by reason of the halting of the procession from stage to stage and the reciting of appropriate verses. As the party is ready to leave the village they sing:

"To-day is a good day.
We shall see a maiden as fair as cotton-wool.
This is indeed a good day.
We shall behold one as fair as a cotton boll."

On setting forth, they do not overlook the unmarried girls of the village:

"Here you have not loved me.
Listen to my wedding-horns blowing yonder.
Remain here. You have not esteemed me.
Watch us depart with our horns blowing."

On the journey they sing:

"The wedding is timed at the coming of the rats.
Unless death intrudes, we shall prosper.
The marriage takes place when the rodents are here.
Unless death comes, we shall work and be happy." [5]

As they approach the bride's village a party greets them:

"The 'the kaw' blossoms in the dark of the moon.
The moon waxes and wanes.
The 'the kaw' blossoms in the full of the moon.
The moon increases and declines." [6]

The above stanza refers to the maidens, still unmarried, who are waiting from one moon to the next. The groom replies:

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[5] The years of full crops always bring a plague of rats in the hills. Thus, the time of rats is a time of prosperity.

[6] This verse, recited by the villagers, refers to the girls who have not yet married and are still waiting from one moon to the next.

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"When first the world was created,
The edolius and the termite toiled together.[6]
When the earth was first formed,
These two helped each other and made it."

The "Y'wa" conception appears in the last stanza, given below:

"When first the earth was formed,
It was God ('Y'wa') who formed it.
When first the world was fashioned,
It was God who fashioned it."

In some of the omitted parts of the poem we find the thought expressed that the edolius and the termite were co-workers with God in creating the world. It should, perhaps, be explained that [136] the termite is the white ant, which builds high mounds all over the country; while the *edolius paradiscus* is a black bird, a little smaller than a crow, with two long tail quills having tufts of feathers at the ends. Why this bird should have been given a part in the work of creation does not appear.

Characterization of "Y'wa" as the Eternal One is herewith given in two translations from an ancient poem, the first of these being by an unknown person of an earlier time and the other by Dr. Francis Mason.

"God is eternal, He alone [existed]
Before the world was made; His throne
Interminable ages stood,
And He, the everlasting God.
Two worlds may pass, and yet He lives.
Perfect in attributes divine,
Age after age His glories shine."[7]

The rendering by Dr. Mason is as follows:

"God is unchangeable, external;
He was in the beginning of the world.
God is endless and eternal;
He existed in the beginning of the world.
God is truly unchangeable and eternal;
He existed in ancient time, at the beginning of the world.
The life of God is endless;
A succession of worlds does not measure his existence.
God is perfect in every meritorious attribute,
And dies not in succession on succession of worlds."[8]

[6] Rev. T. Than Bya, D.D., *Karen Customs, Ceremonies, and Poetry*, p. 51. The Karen name for the edolius is "hto khlu." Dr. Mason speaks of it as the Moulmein nightingale: *Burma*, p. 219.

[7] This version is printed in D. M. Stanton's *The Loyal Karens of Burma*.

[8] Mason, *The Karen Apostle*, op., p. 97.

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776 782 made to them lest their anger should be aroused by some untoward act on the part of men. Their special task is to preside over births. Their king occupies himself with the creation of men, but, being interrupted continually by various demands upon his attention, he turns out many defectives, cripples, and badly colored ones. This poor workmanship led men in the past to revile the "Mü xa," who, consequently, no longer show themselves to mortals. They have the power to unite the souls of those whom they have predestined to marry. Those thus paired are vouchsafed prosperous and happy lives; but if they succeed in mating with others than those intended for them, incompatibility and adversity surely follow. The "Mü xa" are often addressed as though they were the parents of mankind and appear to hold places comparable to that of Zeus or Jupiter among the gods of the ancient Greeks and Romans. They are often spoken of in Karen lore as dwelling on Mount "Thaw Thi," as Zeus in Greek mythology had his abode on Mount Olympus.[2] In the celebration of family rites and feasts the "Mü xa" are recognized by having words addressed to them, although the family spirits, commonly designated as "Bgha," are often thought of as the powers to be propitiated at this ceremony. In some sections of the country the "parents of mankind" are supposed to receive offerings in their extended hands, which are thereby cleansed. They are then expected to return to their celestial abode, the hope being that they will not descend again to the dwelling-place of mortals, lest, by some mischance, they should become offended and bring misfortune upon men. They are believed to be able to assume any form they wish and to render themselves visible or invisible at will.[3]

776 137 824 136 137 One member of this group, called "Mü xa hkleu," is thought to preside over the much-venerated banyan *(Ficus religiost)*. It was under a banyan tree that Gautama Buddha received his enlightenment. The banyan is, however, held sacred by most of the tribes of Indo-China, even though they are not Buddhists. No doubt the wonderful vitality of the seeds of this tree which germinate anywhere, especially in the crotches of other trees and in the head of the palm, later enveloping, killing, and thriving on its host, has helped to evoke the veneration of the peoples familiar with the banyan. According to the Karen legends, the rhinoceros ("ta do hkaw") is the beast on which the guardian spirit of the banyan tree is accustomed

[2] See Chapter XXV in regard to Mount "Thaw Thi," pp. 283-284.
[3] For a description of the rites tendered to the "Mü xa" see pp. 248, 254, 280.

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to ride when searching for the "k' las" of human beings. Any person who kills one of these animals arouses the enmity of the spirit.

The "Hti k' sa kaw k' sa," or "lords of the water and land," or "lords of the earth," are the deities who rule over the lands of the earth. They are superior to the spirits that preside over rivers and mountains and have tempers that are easily disturbed. Ill-spoken words, as well as improper and immoral actions, easily offend them; and they take vengeance on persons guilty of such misdemeanors by sending tigers, snakes, and various illnesses upon them. They are sometimes confused with the king of hades, who also passes judgment on the sins of mortals. One way to avoid angering the lords of the earth is to scrape a little rice from the top of the pot while cooking and lay it aside as an offering to them. Concerning their relation to these divinities, the people say that if they transgress in their language while in a distant land, the lords of the earth will kill them before dark; but if guilty of swearing or using indecent words in their own country, they can assuage the anger of these spirits by making an offering of rice and water at the foot of a tree and uttering the following prayer: "O Lords of the earth, we are ignorant people. Whatever transgressions we have been guilty of in using harsh or obscene words, do not, O Lords, hold them against us. We will make offerings annually. If we do not die, you shall eat of our food every year and of our children's offerings generation after generation."

Every tree, river, lake, and, indeed, almost every natural object is supposed by the Karen to be inhabited by its "k' sa" or divinity. These local spirits, however, are regarded by many as constituting lower orders of the divinities of the first group. When a man selects the location for his field, he must perform certain ceremonies to win their good will. The simplest of these is to place offerings of rice and water at the foot of some large tree in the plot chosen or to go through the ceremonies described in the chapter on Agricultural Pursuits and Other Occupations.[1] There are also the annual sacrifices to these spirits that have been described fully in the chapter on Propitiatory Sacrifices and Healing Offerings, pp. 234, ff.

The nefarious work and character of "Naw k' plaw" or "Mü kaw li" have been sufficiently revealed in the narration of the story of his temptation of the first parents of the Karen race in the

[1] See ante, pp. 76, ff.